1999

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Senior Thesis
Spring 1999

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"You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and *our heart is restless until it rests in you.*"[1] This is an often quoted line from the *Confessions,* written just before the close of the fourth century, and one of many passages pointed to by scholars as evidence of the influence of Greek philosophy in St. Augustine's numerous works. For those of us who need something a little less subtle, Augustine (354-430) spells it out for us by mentioning Plato (428-347BC) and Plotinus (205-270) on numerous occasions in his wealth of writings. He would be the last to argue with those who claim that his mind was filled with the wisdom of the Ancients. Well versed in the many bright teachers of the philosophical schools, Augustine weighed their theories about the seen and unseen world, the existence and composition of the soul, and other great matters on the scales provided by God in the Holy Scriptures. Many students of his writings, however, find themselves wondering about the depth of Augustine's Christian conversion after reading the high praise found in passages like the following from *Contra Academics*:

> Not long after this, then, all obstinacy and pertinacity died down, and Plato's doctrine, which in philosophy is the purest and most clear, the clouds of error having been removed, shone forth especially in Plotinus. The Platonic philosopher is regarded as being so like Plato, that one would think they had lived at the same time. The interval of time between them is, however, so great that one should rather think that Plato had come to life again in Plotinus.[2]

But was his Greek-influenced search to understand and explain God's mysteries detrimental to his Christian faith or the faith of those who would come after him?

"What", asks Tertullian, a church leader from the late second century, "has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"[3] In a famous portion of one of his many letters, St. Jerome (347-420) tells of a nightmare in which he has come before the Judgment Seat and is accused of being a follower of the Latin writer Cicero, not Christ.[4] Excerpts like these suggest that some of the early Church Fathers were opposed to Greek thought in any form. However, if we look at writings of other early church leaders, especially those from the eastern half of the Roman Empire, we see a new religion's adherents searching for the means to defend it against the attacks of pagan intellectuals. A recurring theme throughout their letters and commentaries is the compatibility of the Greek schools of thought with Christian beliefs. Jesus Christ was seen as the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy and the Truth sought by Greek philosophy in the minds of several early Church Fathers. The struggle between these two opposing views of the value of philosophy to Christianity is nowhere more visible than in the works of St. Augustine. It is necessary to look at the history of this struggle prior to the advent of Augustine to get an understanding of the environment in which he developed the Christian thought that would influence the ideas of thinkers in Western civilization throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.

During the middle of the first century, an old man by the seaside convinced a student, well studied in the many schools of Greek philosophy, of the superiority of Christianity to philosophy.[5] This student, known to us as Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165), was not convinced, however, to leave behind his Greek philosophy. Instead, he attempted to demonstrate how Jesus Christ was not only the God of the Old Testament, but the transcendent, immutable God of Plato as well.[6] Plato and his followers were

simply not fully enlightened and neither were the Jewish Patriarchs who walked the earth prior to Christ's appearance. Both Abraham and Socrates were equally recipients of divine revelation and, in St. Justin's eyes, "Christians before the arrival of Christ."[7] This idea was nothing new. Justin Martyr based his interpretation of the nearness of Greek philosophy and Biblical theology on a body of works produced by a few prominent Hellenized Jews, most notably Philo of Alexandria in the first century.[8] Their theories suggest that the Greek and Hebrew worlds were related more closely than either was willing to admit.

Biographies of Plato tell the story of the philosopher's visit to Egypt at some point in his life. Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of the Apostle Paul (?-c. 62), argued that Plato became familiar with the works of Moses, the Pentateuch, during his stay among the Egyptians.[9] Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37-c. 93), author of *Antiquities,* goes even further and boldly states that not only was Plato inspired by reading Moses, Greek civilization is wholly dependent on the philosophy and traditions of Jewish antiquity.[10] Although modern students of history would laugh at such absurd claims, many educated people in the first and second centuries found such theories plausible. This willingness to relate Greek and Jewish civilizations so closely is argued more convincingly from the likeness of the stories of the Old Testament to the epics of Homer. However, this is only conjecture. We must move to the first century and the New Testament to find an unassailable position from which to assert the kinship of Greek philosophic tradition and Judeo-Christian thought.

The Church of the Middle Ages, with its restrictions on innovative thought, would have seemed quite foreign to St. Paul. His letters to the various churches during his day,

along with the prologue in the Gospel of John, are the best representations of Christianity's relationship to the wisdom of the Ancient Greeks. Even a cursory look at the apostle to the Gentiles' works shows us why Albert Schweitzer called Paul "the patron saint of thought."[11] Although filled with admonitions against the foolishness of the "wisdom of the wise",[12] the apostle's epistles are liberally sprinkled with ideas that are overtly Greek in nature. The second letter to the church at Corinth explains the hope for the eternity of heaven in terms decidedly Platonic--

> Our troubles are slight and short-lived; and the outcome an eternal glory which outweighs them far. Meanwhile our eyes are fixed, not on things seen, but on the things that are unseen: for what is seen passes away; what is unseen is eternal. for we know that if the earthly frame that houses us today should be demolished we possess a building which God has provided--a house not made by human hands but eternal, and in heaven.[13]

The idea of the unseen eternal is echoed in Plato in dialogues in which the participants discuss the beginnings of the world and its nature.[14] Is it a coincidence that Paul sees things in a very similar light to the Greeks? There are two telling passages that do more than simply hint at Paul's willingness to use the wisdom of the Greeks to succeed in convincing his mainly Gentile audience of their need for this new religion he was now preaching. In the Acts of the Apostles we see Paul at the Aeropagus, providing answer to the question posed by the academics there--Who is this foreign god being preached? The apostle replies in a manner reminiscent of Socrates--"Men of Athens, I see that in everything that concerns religion you are uncommonly scrupulous. For as I was going around looking at the objects of your worship, I noticed among other things an altar bearing the inscription 'to an Unknown God.' What you worship but do not know--that is what I now proclaim."[15] The definitive evidence of the apostle's readiness to adapt himself to his audience is found in his own letter to the church at Corinth--"I have

become all things to all men so that by all means I might save some."[16] Many of the men who took up the banner of Christ in the next few centuries after Paul show the same eagerness to adapt themselves to others in order to make the Gospel available to all. The intellectual environment in which Christianity found itself during its formative stages made this adaptation a difficult task. Only those learned in the wisdom of the Greeks were capable of demonstrating the reasonableness of the message they preached. Fortunately for the young Church, there was a succession of wise men prepared to give a logical explanation for what they believed.

Two of the great minds of early Christianity who provide us with good examples of the merging of Greek thought with the principles taught by the disciples of Jesus belong to two learned Alexandrians. Clement, a contemporary of Tertullian, born in the middle of the second century, was brought up in Athens and felt at home with the intellectual discussions of his day. He believed wholeheartedly in the conjecture that Plato was familiar with the writings of Moses and had developed many of his theories on the cosmos based on them. For Clement, Greek philosophy was to the Greeks what Moses was to the Jews. Both paths led to Christ and salvation.[17] Rational thought was not abhorrent to God and humans were in fact fashioned in the image of God's Word, which is pure reason, according to this early Christian apologist.[18] Clement's student, Origen (c. 185-c. 254), was an even more influential figure among the intellectuals of the Early Church.

There is speculation that Origen of Alexandria was a classmate of the greatest mind of Neoplatonic philosophy, Plotinus, before coming under the tutelage of Clement.[19] Regardless of whether this is true or not, Origen was certainly familiar with

the finer points of the various philosophical schools of the Greeks. In the works in which he is defending the faith against criticisms of anti-rationalism we find wonderful examples of a man who sees a clear line between the thoughts of the ancient world and his Christian faith. He assures his readers that a man coming to the Gospel from Greek philosophy and its concepts and training would have no difficulty in judging the verity of Christ's teachings. And judging their truth, would put it into practice and, therefore, prove its correctness.[20] Although the wisdom of the Greeks provided a powerful arsenal for defending the Christian faith,[21] the ultimate weapon was the Gospel itself, according to Origen. Its divine authority gave it the strength that no Greek proof based on dialectical argument could hope to match.[22]

Saint Augustine's synthesis of Greek philosophy and Christian theology is the bridge over which Western civilization crossed from the world of Late Antiquity to that of the Middle Ages. The innovative thought found in his writings, the bulk of which exceeds that of any other ancient author, provided the foundation for theologians and philosophers to build upon throughout the period of the Reformation, and even into modern times.[23] But just how much of that foundation is made of materials borrowed from the ancient Greeks? This question has been addressed in many learned books and articles over the years.

No serious student of Augustinian thought would argue that the works of Plato and his many imitators did not influence the future Bishop of Hippo. Augustine, himself, confesses to being intellectually indebted to the "noblest of philosophers."[24] He had no dispute with Origen's belief that Greek culture and philosophies were divinely inspired, as was the Law given to the Jews. To reject their Greek heritage was to reject God's

guidance of the Human Race.[25] Certainly Augustine and his contemporaries were comfortable using their intellect when searching out the truths in the world around them. The Greeks stimulated them to search for that greater Truth, which Plato had only been able to speak of in theory, which was revealed in the person of Jesus. This great legacy of using human reason, in conjunction with divine revelation, as well as faith is Augustine's most important contribution in the eyes of educated Christians today.

Augustine was born and spent his childhood in Thagaste, an ancient town located in North Africa. His first contact with Greek philosophy came through reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, a lost work that was modeled after an Aristotelean classic. In fact, most of his acquaintance with Greek ideas he came by through second-hand means. All his early learning in the subject came from studying Cicero and Varro.[26] Although trained in rhetoric at school in Carthage, Augustine found himself drawn to philosophy and began his intellectual journey in search of truth. Cicero's advice, from the lost *Hortensius* read avidly in Carthage, to pursue wisdom and embrace it "wherever found" became the passion of the young Augustine's life, or so he believed at the time.[27]

The first stop on his road to wisdom came when he discovered the teachings of Mani (c. 216-c. 276). The esoteric Manichean religious dualism of a good god versus an evil universe of matter held Augustine's attention until his meeting with one of the sect's key leaders, Faustus.[28] He found this Manichean leader lacking knowledge in many important subjects. Also he discovered that Faustus was unskilled in the Liberal Arts and his eloquence was due to the "study of a few books of Latin poetry", we are told in *The City of God*.[29] Augustine became disillusioned with the Manichees and began his search for truth anew, which soon led him to Rome.

Augustine arrived in the Eternal City with plans for starting a school of rhetoric. A guilty conscience, due to forsaking his widowed mother, Monica, and a serious illness made his brief stay in Rome an unhappy one.[30] Adding to this was his disappointment in the Roman scholars' practice of cheating teachers out of their pay by changing tutors before their studies were completed. However, while there he was able to make an impression on some influential people and was soon offered a post in Milan as a rhetorician. In Milan, Augustine discovered the Neoplatonists

During his years in Milan, Augustine came under the influence of a group of intellectuals who were looking into the philosophical writings of two Alexandrians from the previous century. Plotinus and his student, Porphyry, who were known as Neo-Platonists because of their attempts to recast Plato's ideas in light of their own more spiritually centered search for truth. They had developed elaborate theories based on Plato's speculations on subjects ranging from ethics to the existence of the soul, which Plotinus had found in the lost texts of Plato he had discovered in Egypt. A close look at the reasoning of these two giants of philosophy, however, reveals that considerable license was taken when applying Plato's thoughts to many of their arguments. Although Porphyry was a gifted student, even his amazing accomplishment in systematically setting out his mentor's rambling thoughts does not provide anything approaching a clear picture of a Neoplatonic Theory. Plotinus' addition of spiritual meanings to Plato's more rational approach may have had such a great influence on Augustine because the future bishop's earlier spiritual leanings. Whether in the reinterpretation of Plotinus and Porphyry, or the writings of the Alexandrian Church Fathers, Plato's thought was still the key ingredient for building a better philosophy.

Of all ancient philosophies, the Early Church Fathers found that Plato's was nearest to Christianity because it recognizes there is one true God who is the author of everything.[31] Plato's god ,the creator, or Demi-Urge, is the Creator God of the Scriptures in Augustine's view. In looking at Plato's *Timaeus* we can understand how Augustine and other Early Church Fathers found the wise man's ideas so compatible with their theology. "...God in the beginning of creation made the body of the universe...", Timaeus explains to Socrates when describing how everything came into being.[32] What Plato had come to by natural reason, Christians had received through revelation in the Incarnation. Since Plato lived before the time of Christ, the fact that he perceived the immortality of the soul and that it could not find happiness except in the light of the one true God made him the "noblest of philosophers" in Augustine's eyes.[33] It can be said that Platonic philosophy provided the means for the seeker Augustine to find that true path that would lead him to the land of milk and honey, but it would be a faith in Christ and His church that would allow him to reside there permanently.[34]

The Bishop of Milan, Ambrose, was instrumental in Augustine's conversion to Christianity. Ambrose was an eloquent and inspiring speaker, who was highly educated in the liberal arts and Greek philosophy. In his sermons, Augustine found the intellectual aspect of Christian thought that had been missing in the Christian instruction he had received in his childhood from his devoted mother, Monica.[35] His recent discovery of the Neoplatonic theories supported nicely the image of God and His hierarchical universe put forth by Ambrose.[36] While in his youth he had scoffed at the Christianity of the uneducated, Augustine now was able to see similarities between his Greek philosophy and the New Testament that caused him to begin to reconsider the message of the

scriptures. He now found it relatively easy to pass from Neoplatonic philosophy to Christian doctrine, when seeing the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul with the light provided by Ambrose.[37] The conversion of the greatly admired scholar Victorinus, a knowledgeable and devout Neoplatonist, was the final push needed to convince Augustine of the possibility that Christianity was tenable in the world of the intellectual.[38] He had now the willingness to surrender his mind to God, but giving up the pleasures of the body was an even bigger battle he had yet to face.

Men like Ambrose and Victorinus inspired Augustine to the point where he wanted nothing more than to imitate them in their holy ways. However, he found that though his mind was set on it, his body was not so eager to follow.[39] His studies of the Apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans provided the insight into this problem of "two wills."[40] He struggled with giving up the pleasurable habits of many years, and the victory was won only through what appeared to be divine intervention.

The famous "take up and read" passage of the *Confessions* is evidence to how quickly Augustine embraced the miraculous and mystical nature of his new religion. When he heard this strange message given in a child's voice, he obeyed the command willingly, but only after he used his reason to come to the conclusion that this was not an ordinary occurrence.[41] Randomly opening a Bible and reading the words of the Apostle Paul about no longer giving in to the flesh, but only to Jesus Christ, was the miraculous final touch for his complete conversion.[42]

Once Augustine had accepted the tenets of the Christian faith, he began to try to understand the world in relation to the revelations in scripture that he now gave precedence to, while still seeing the truth in many Platonic theories as well. His prolific

writing has left us with an unusually clear picture of the development of his theology/philosophy. It is not a terribly difficult task to point out the many similarities between the Neoplatonists and Augustine. Both Plotinus and his student Porphyry, the key proponents of the new school based on Plato's works, were interested in interpreting the ancient philosophy in light of the supernatural religions of their current era.[43] They, and Augustine, were undoubtedly borrowing from Plato and the ideas developed by Hellenized Jews and Christians from the first century.

The epistles of Paul and the allegorical interpretation of Genesis by his elder contemporary Philo of Alexandria demonstrate the earliest attempts to explain the God of Hebrew creation in the words and thoughts of ancient Greek philosophy. Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Genesis creation is filled with terminology that resembles Platonic theories of the creation. Philo understands Moses' "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created them",[44] to represent not a copy of God's bodily image, for God has no human form,[45] but God's Mind. The human mind is fashioned after the image of the archetype "Mind of the Universe".[46] In Plotinus' interpretation of Plato, the archetype is found in the Divine Mind, the intellectual component of the triad of the "hypostases" into which everything will eventually return.[47]

There is no disagreement to the Neoplatonic influence in Augustine's philosophy, for it is apparent that he made full use of whatever he found in the works of Plotinus and Porphyry that did not directly contradict his understanding of the Scriptures. He appropriated much from Plato and reshaped it to fit within his Christian scheme of things, just as his predecessors had molded Plato into their new form of philosophy. He took the god of the Platonists, who formed the world from the existing matter of space, and

saw him as the God of Genesis who created the world out of nothing.[48] When we look at the three key areas of Augustine's work we get an extraordinary glimpse of his genius in synthesizing the philosophies of the Greek schools with the Bible. The creation of the universe, the nature of the soul, and the mysterious Holy Trinity are our focus.

St. Augustine and his predecessors owed much of their understanding in the area of the creation of the universe to one man: Philo of Alexandria. Philo was a product of a city that was home to a great number of Jews of the Diaspora and the cultural center of the ancient world. It is not surprising that he would spend most of his life attempting the fusion of Moses and Greek philosophy. In his *De opificio mundi*(On the Creation) we have what is most likely the first major work to present the Genesis account of the beginning of things as allegory, not as a narrative of literal, chronological events. The six days of creation mentioned by Moses are not a true length of time, for God does all things simultaneously and is not bound by time, in Philo's understanding. The six days are simply an allusion to the necessary ordering of things in the physical world. .[49] We see shades of Plato in the *Timaeus* here.[50] And certainly we see the influence of the great mathematician, Pythagoras, in the philosophies of both Philo and Plato. This allegorical interpretation appealed to Augustine and he discussed the creation in similar terms in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of his *Confessions*.

A bigger question than that of time, in the minds of the ancient Greeks and their intellectual descendants, was how was the universe created? There is a striking resemblance between the answer given in the Hebrew tradition and that found in the theories of Plato and Plotinus. Augustine finds a nearly perfect match between the creation story of the *Timaeus* and the one found in Genesis.[51] They both present a Maker

who fashions an ordered world out of chaos and disorder. But who is this Maker and what is his nature?

"To discover the Maker and Father of the universe is indeed a hard task, and having found him it would be impossible to tell everyone about him."[52] Yes, it is difficult to discover that which is spirit. Both Plato and Augustine, along with the author of the Gospel of John, agree that it is absurd to believe that God possesses a material body, subject to change like the rest of physical creation. God is incorporeal. "God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."[53] In the *Republic,* Socrates counters arguments that promote the position that the gods change shapes and forms. "Do you think that God is a magician, and of a nature to appear insidiously now in one shape, and now in another...or is he one and the same immutably fixed in his own proper image?"[54] Augustine applauds this deduction of Plato's regarding the nature of God's being. There is agreement between the two philosophers in that nothing can have its existence except from "him whose being is real because unchangeable".[55] The Greeks and Augustine part ways when looking at from what the creation was wrought. Did the invisible, immutable God fashion his mutable creation from existent matter or *ex nihilo*?

The doctrine developed by the Church in its first two centuries insisted upon the creation of the universe out of nothing. Influenced by Plato and the Neoplatonists, Augustine sought to reconcile the account of the beginning found in Genesis with the Platonic speculations, while still submitting himself to the authority of the Church. Plato seems to understand creation as being an act of a creator. Plato's creator, however, fashions the visible universe after a pattern that is already in existence.[56] Does this pattern contain something material either with form or without form? Plato describes

mysterious universal forms, or Ideas, which are found in the mind of some Divine Intelligence. In Plotinus' philosophy there is no question to the eternal nature of matter. His belief in the cyclical flux of matter in motion, which is neither created nor destroyed, is compatible with our modern understanding of the physical laws of our world.[57] Augustine found it difficult to synthesize the instantaneous creation of Genesis with the ideas of the philosophers that seemed to point to the eternal nature of the cosmos. Although struggling with this subject throughout many of his writings, he found it necessary only to emphasize his belief that the world was not eternal. Genesis is silent as to whether the matter from which the Creator formed the world was something that had always existed. The Bishop of Hippo never gives a definitive answer to the question of whether matter itself had been created by God. On the subject of the nature of the soul, he is more assured in his convictions.

Nearly all religions have concerned themselves with the question of the soul. Is the soul part of our physical being? Or is it some intangible essence, independent of earthbound forms, existing as a separate entity? In this area Augustine parts company with Plato and most of the other Greek philosophers. Although all would agree to the immaterial nature of the soul, the Greeks believe that the soul is itself eternal, with neither beginning nor end.[58] [59] Augustine and the Christian tradition hold that the soul is immortal, yet with a beginning. Both Plotinus and Augustine were influenced by the famous commentary on the soul that is given by Plato in his *Republic.* In this dialogue the philosopher compares the soul to the physical eye. As the eye is able to distinguish between objects only due to the light reflected by the sun, so the soul is capable of perceiving and understanding truth because of the light given by the Divine Mind or

Intellect.[60] Plotinus would interpret this as the ability of the soul of man to unite with the World-Soul through the enlightenment attained through introspection and contemplation of the Divine Mind of the One.[61] Augustine approaches this mysterious relationship of the human soul to the divine with the help of Plato and Plotinus. Not only is the soul that which perceives truth and is enlightened by the Divine Mind, it is nothing less than the image of God that is spoken of in the Genesis account of the creation of humankind. The image of God cannot be a corruptible body, for God is spirit. Therefore, the "image of God" must be the soul. This soul is the image of the one great Soul. And, like Plotinus, Augustine believes that the many little souls, or pieces of the Soul, will one day all flow together and merge into the One.[62] [63] Now, as for what the soul truly is in its essence and how did God create souls, this is beyond human knowledge according to Augustine.[64] He agrees with the Greeks that all the souls were with God before they were sent into the earthly bodies of humans. However, God did create souls. They were not pre-existent.

It seems certain that the Trinity of Augustine is similar to that of Plotinus, which was comprised of the One, the Realm of Ideas or Intellect, and the World-Soul.[65] These three hypostases are recreated on a smaller scale in human beings. The three aspects of humans that are modeled after the Holy Trinity are being, knowing, and willing. Augustine asks the reader in his *Confessions* to be mindful of how inseparable these three are. Although the Triune God is far beyond the comprehension of his created children, this analogy is helpful in shedding some light on the mysterious doctrine of one God, three Persons.[66] Later in his career, Augustine would elaborate on this trinity of human soul, which are the mind, knowledge, and love.[67] Without doubt, the Bishop of Hippo's heroic effort to alleviate some of the confusion over this enigmatic church doctrine of the

Trinity resulted in one of his most important accomplishments. The theories of Plotinus were especially helpful in this area. Augustine would be the first to agree to this.

The influence that the Greek philosophers had on Augustine is undeniable. His great talent was his ability to synthesize their theories with the Holy Scriptures. That which he found in Plato and Plotinus that he couldn't re-cast in an acceptable form after close examination of the Bible, he left behind. Later in life, the Old and New Testaments began to take precedence in his thought and philosophical explorations. As the years passed, he was more and more cautious to look at all philosophical models in the light of the Scriptures. If there was a disagreement between God's word and Plato's speculation, the choice was an easy one for him to make. His love of Greek philosophy was not comparable to his love for his Lord and Savior.

While the similarities between Augustine and the Neoplatonists are numerous, there are some striking differences. A chasm between Christianity and Greek thought that could not be bridged was the theory about the body. Like the Manichees, the Neoplatonists believed the body was corrupt in its substance. Origen also held to the belief that the body was a prison house that was created to restrain evil things.[68] Since God was the Supreme Good, he could not possibly take on the form of a human. It was impossible that the Word was made corruptible flesh. Therefore, if the Incarnation was not a possibility, then there could be no personal Savior on whom the Christians rested their faith. The Genesis account of God deeming good everything in the universe he created is the key evidence put forth by Augustine against the Neoplatonist's position on the inherent evil of the physical body.[69] The Incarnation and the Resurrection were the cornerstones of the faith, and the lack of acceptance on the part of the philosophers of

these two doctrines revealed the limitations of classic philosophy. Augustine believed that faith is the first step to understanding, reason is only part of the process.[70]

The ancient philosophy of Plato, or its Neoplatonic mutations, was always part of Augustine's approach to trying to make sense of the world around him. But throughout his writings on things "eternal", he always secures his hypotheses in the solid foundation of the Scriptures and Church doctrine.[71] We see the originality in his thought when we look at his controversial theory of predestination. The idea that only a certain number of persons will be redeemed in the end seems to go against the Platonic and Christian belief in a God who is Love and the Supreme Good. On a point like this we see that Augustine owes a greater debt to the Apostle Paul for his intellectual reasoning than to any of the Platonists.[72] In his letter to the Christians at Rome, Saint Paul writes these words which will become the final word on predestination for Augustine: "For God knew his own before ever they were . . . and it is these, so fore-ordained, whom he has also called."[73]

As Augustine ages, he seems to put less stock in the rational thinking of the philosophers and more in the Inner Light that is given by God. This is not surprising when we study the words of he who was a greater intellectual influence than all the Greek philosophers-

> Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles . . . the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom . . . [74]

Paul was capable of eloquence and superior wisdom, but the message of Christianity is one of simple humility, and the intellectual must always follow behind the spiritual because of this.

It has been asserted that Augustine is not the systematic thinker that philosophers like Plotinus and Porphry are.[75] It is true that he left many works unfinished and sometimes to be less than conclusive. His willingness to change his position in philosophical arguments over time is most likely due to his growing humility and/or the unimportance of the subject. Many times it was his compassion for people and their needs that caused him to reinvent his views. A good example of this is his reaction to the growing importance put on the bodies of the martyrs by the less-educated members of the Church. Augustine inverted the traditional view on the hierarchy of the universe by putting the saints closer to God than the angels. The idea of intercession by human beings, who were like themselves, was more comfortable than dealing with the mysterious angelic creatures.[76] If this is not a sign of genius, it is certainly one of great talent. That Augustine's reasoning for that concession to the uneducated masses is brilliant cannot be denied. It is his belief that through remembering the martyrs and their victories we will be encouraged to imitate them. By keeping them in mind, we keep our road to God in sight.[77]

The importance of Greek philosophy to the development of theology in the Western world cannot be overestimated. It is necessary to note that it was not always a positive influence. The Pelagian heresy has its roots in the works of Plotinus on the ability of human beings eventually achieving self-perfection. Augustine spent many hours perfecting arguments against this and other similar deviations from newly formed

doctrines in the Church. This may have been the dam that prevented a flood of future heresies based on theories found in Greek philosophy.[78] The leaders of the Spanish Inquisition would take this attempt to streamline the Christian religion a little too far. If common people were allowed access to God's word, how great the number of heretical interpretations might possibly be born? Throughout the later Middle Ages and into Modern times philosophy has been looked upon with suspicion. There always lurks the danger of it reasoning away or perverting the doctrines held dear by the Church. It is only in the hands of the brilliant churchmen such as Augustine, and his intellectual descendant Thomas Aquinas, that Greek philosophy can be reshaped to a form that is acceptable to the majority of the faithful.

Nineteenth-century philosophers like Soren Kierkegaard insisted that human reason had no place in religious belief. God cannot be proved and it is unnecessary to seek the "historical Jesus." All that one needs is a faith, based not on the intellect, but on experience.[79] But men and women are still coming to this faith through an intellectual process. One of the great Christian thinkers of this century, C.S. Lewis followed a path very much similar to the one Augustine traveled sixteen hundred years earlier. For both men, the Bible was the inspired revelation of God and the source of the Supreme Truth. In Augustine's opinion, all the finest philosophical theories were outshone by the simplest verse in the Holy Bible.[80]

The philosophies of the Greeks were limited, in the eyes of Augustine, especially as he grew in his understanding of the Scriptures, but they were on the right road. With great imagination and humility, Saint Augustine used their wisdom to knock at the door where the greater mysteries are kept. Although faith is the only key that will gain

entrance, to Augustine and many of the other Church Fathers the wisdom of the Greeks is helpful in carrying the pilgrim to the doorstep. For them, the final destination, which Augustine called the "City of God", is arrived at only through both faith and reason. All of Christianity is in debt to the early Church Fathers for their heroic efforts in strengthening the intellectual foundation of the religion. Augustine's synthesis of Christian doctrine with Greek philosophy stands as one of the greatest achievements in Western thought.

On his deathbed, Augustine is said to have spoken these words at one point: "He is no great man who thinks it a great thing that sticks and stones should fall, and that men, who must die, should die."[81] These words of a wise man could easily be attributed to Augustine, or to the Proverbs of the Old Testament. They are, however, the words of Plotinus. Even at death's door, philosophy still provided consolation for the saint. Faith must take precedence over reason in a Christian, but need never disable it completely.

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[1] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), X (I) 1
[2] Augustine, *Contra Academics*, trans. by John O'Meara (Westminster: Newman Press, 1950), III.18.41
[3] Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, trans by T.R. Glover (London: Wm Heinemann Ltd, 1926), XXXXVI, 9.
[4] Jerome, *Letters*, trans by F.A. Wright (London: Wm Heinemann ltd, 1933), Letter 22.30.4

[5] Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, (Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1967), 74.
[6] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by B. Jowett (New York: Doubleday, 1973), II.380d.
[7] Chadwick, *The Early Church*. 82.
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[29] Augustine, *The City of God*, V, 7, 12.
[30] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, (New York: Faber and Faber, 1967), 69.
[31] Augustine, *City of God*, VIII,5, 243.
[32] Plato, *Timaeus*, 31.b
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[39] Ibid, VIII x,22.
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[41] Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, xii, 29.
[42] Romans 13:13,14, NIV.
[43] John Herman Randall, "The Intelligible Universe of Plotinus", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30 (1969): 3.
[44] Genesis 1:27, NEB.
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[49] Philo, *De opificio mundi*, III.13.
[50] Plato, *Timaeus*, 31c.
[51] Compare *Timaeus* 30a,b with Genesis 1:1,2.
[52] *Timaeus* 28c.
[53] John 4:24, NIV.

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[55] Augustine, *City of God*, VIII.vi.
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[60] Plato, *Republic*, VI, 508b-509a.
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